

Survey in Trabzon and Gümüşhane Vilayets, Turkey, 1992–1994

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The Turkish coast and mountains to the east of Trabzon are a region largely neglected by travelers and archaeologists of all periods, with the notable exception of the Byzantine topographical surveys carried out by A. A. M. Bryer and D. Winfield in the 1960s and 1970s.¹ The surveys of the sites at Buzluca, Hortokop, and Araklı Kalesi represent the first attempts to record and investigate the archaeology of this region using modern survey techniques (Fig. 1). Initially we were concerned to record the surviving structural evidence for the Roman and early Byzantine military presence on the coastlands of the Black Sea in the district of the modern town of Araklı, but as the survey progressed it became clear that we were dealing with two sites spanning the period from the late first century A.D. to the Ottoman conquest of Trebizond.

ARAKLI KALESİ AND BUZLUCA (CANAYER)

The site of Araklı Kalesi has been identified with the Roman fort of *Hyssos Limen* visited in the early second century A.D. by Arrian, governor of Cappadocia. In the early fifth century the garrison was listed as *Cohors Apuleia Cives Romanorum*. An alternative ancient name is *Sousarmia*; the Hyssos River can be equated with the Kara Dere and Sousarmia with the modern town of Araklı.² Modern Sürmene is 5 km to the east. The site of Araklı Kalesi lies a

little inland from the modern town on the west side of the valley.³ The rectangular enclosure measured 138 m north to south and 130 m east to west (Fig. 2). The curtain wall survives only as a rubble core up to 2.5 m high. No trace was seen of towers or gates on the north, south, or east sides. On the west wall, the uphill, outer side was masked by hill wash, but on the inner face it was possible to locate the towers by the entrances and traces of stairs that have survived. There was clear evidence for an angle tower at the northwest corner, together with three interval towers located about 30 m apart. No sign was found of a gate on this side, and no traces of internal buildings could be seen among the hazelnut orchards and limited modern construction work. In form the site is similar to the known Roman forts at Pithyus and Apsarus on the coast of modern Georgia.⁴ The exact dating of these sites is disputed, but the fort at Araklı conforms to a standard late Roman type.⁵

The site at Buzluca (formerly known as Canayer) lies on an isolated spur east of the modern village and is 30 km east of Trabzon. The site lies within 1.5 km of the Black Sea coast, and a narrow, steep-sided valley links it with the coastal headland of Araklı Burunu, close to the castle at Kalecik.⁶ Recent studies of the classical and medieval topography have sug-

¹A. A. M. Bryer and D. Winfield, *The Byzantine Monuments and Historical Topography of the Pontos*, DOS 20 (Washington, D.C., 1985).

²*Ibid.*, 324–27.

³The site was first identified by M. Bilgin, *Sürmene Tarihi* (Sürmene Belediyesi, 1990), 31–35.

⁴See the recent summary of the evidence in D. Braund, *Georgia in Antiquity* (Oxford, 1994), 182–85.

⁵We are most grateful to Mark Bowden for carrying out the survey of this site in 1993.

⁶Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, 328.

gested that Buzluca may be the site of Hyssos Limen; however, the site of Araklı Kalesi, described above, is a more convincing candidate for this identification.⁷

The principal modern access to the site at Buzluca is from the south, where the spur narrows to a width of only 100 m. Overall the enclosure is trapezoidal in shape, broadening to the north, with a maximum length north to south of 220 m and east to west of 200 m, and a total internal area of 4.2 ha (Fig. 3). The north side is very irregular, with a deep reentrant midway along its length. The ground falls very steeply to the east and north, but with a distinct shoulder to the west. There is a gentle slope across the site from south to north. The slopes and plateau are covered by hazelnut orchards, with small clearings on level ground for the cultivation of maize and beans.

The main structural features are the curtain wall with its associated towers and other attached buildings and the centrally placed church. Stretches of the curtain, up to 40 m in length, survive on all four sides. To the west, north, and east the wall formed a terrace cut into the hillside rarely exceeding one meter in width. To the south the outer face is mainly obscured by hill wash, and wall core survives only on the inner, north, face. Along the 100 m length of the south curtain are four well-preserved structures aligned west to east. The best preserved is at the southeast angle. On its north exterior face is a fine chamfered cornice at the same level as the surviving floor inside the tower. Traces of this cornice may be seen around all four sides of the exterior; at the southwest angle the cornice was masked and preserved by the curtain wall with an unweathered profile. This indicates that the structure did not project in front of the curtain wall and that it was structurally earlier than the curtain. At the east end of the interior are the remains of an inscribed apse; there was a door to the west. Below the level of the cornice, the mortared rubble walls are faced with uncoursed basalt rubble blocks, but, by contrast, above it the walls, both inside and outside, are faced with thin limestone slabs presenting an ashlar or blockwork face. Similar construction is seen

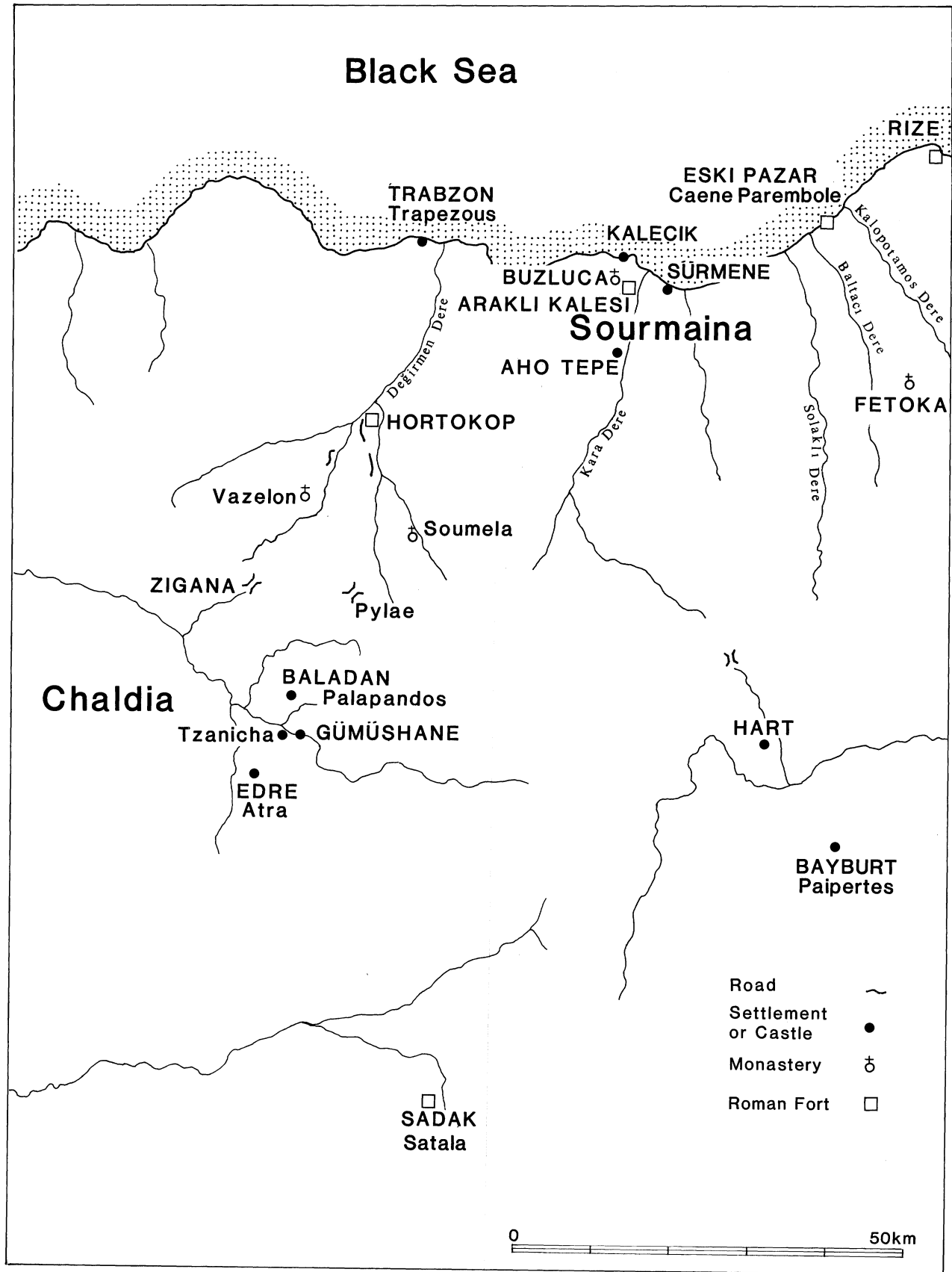
elsewhere along the south curtain and at the west and north gates. Toward the west end of the south curtain and at the southwest angle are two small churches, 8.5 m long and 5 m wide, constructed astride the curtain wall, both with external semicircular apses. Remains of a chamfered cornice are visible at the southwest angle, although the wall is curved at the angle below the cornice, suggesting that at this point the curtain wall preceded the building of the church. Apart from this evidence for three single-cell churches along the south curtain, there also appears to be a row of lean-to buildings toward the east end, one of which may preserve an inscribed apse. The south gate cannot be identified with certainty. Winfield recorded fragments of an *opus sectile* floor from a building he identified with the south gate, but no trace of this flooring now survives, and the gateway can only be imprecisely located between the southeast church and the central church on the south curtain; it may well represent a chapel rather than a gate on this side.⁸

The west curtain wall survives in a number of places, with fragments of two internal buildings and an angle tower to the northwest, but the major feature is the west gate, which probably formed the main access to the site. This takes the form of an internal tower-gate with a barrel vault, aligned east-west, at right angles to the curtain. The remains of the apsidal east end survive on the first floor, above the vault. The west wall of the tower-church stands to a height of 7.47 m above the modern floor of the vault and is pierced by a window 1.38 m high and 0.36 m wide. A terrace within the interior of the site indicates that there was a formal roadway linking the west gate with the main church (see Fig. 3). At the northwest angle is a square tower, unusually for Buzluca without evidence of a chapel in the upper structures; this was probably a watchtower covering the main approach to the site from the north.

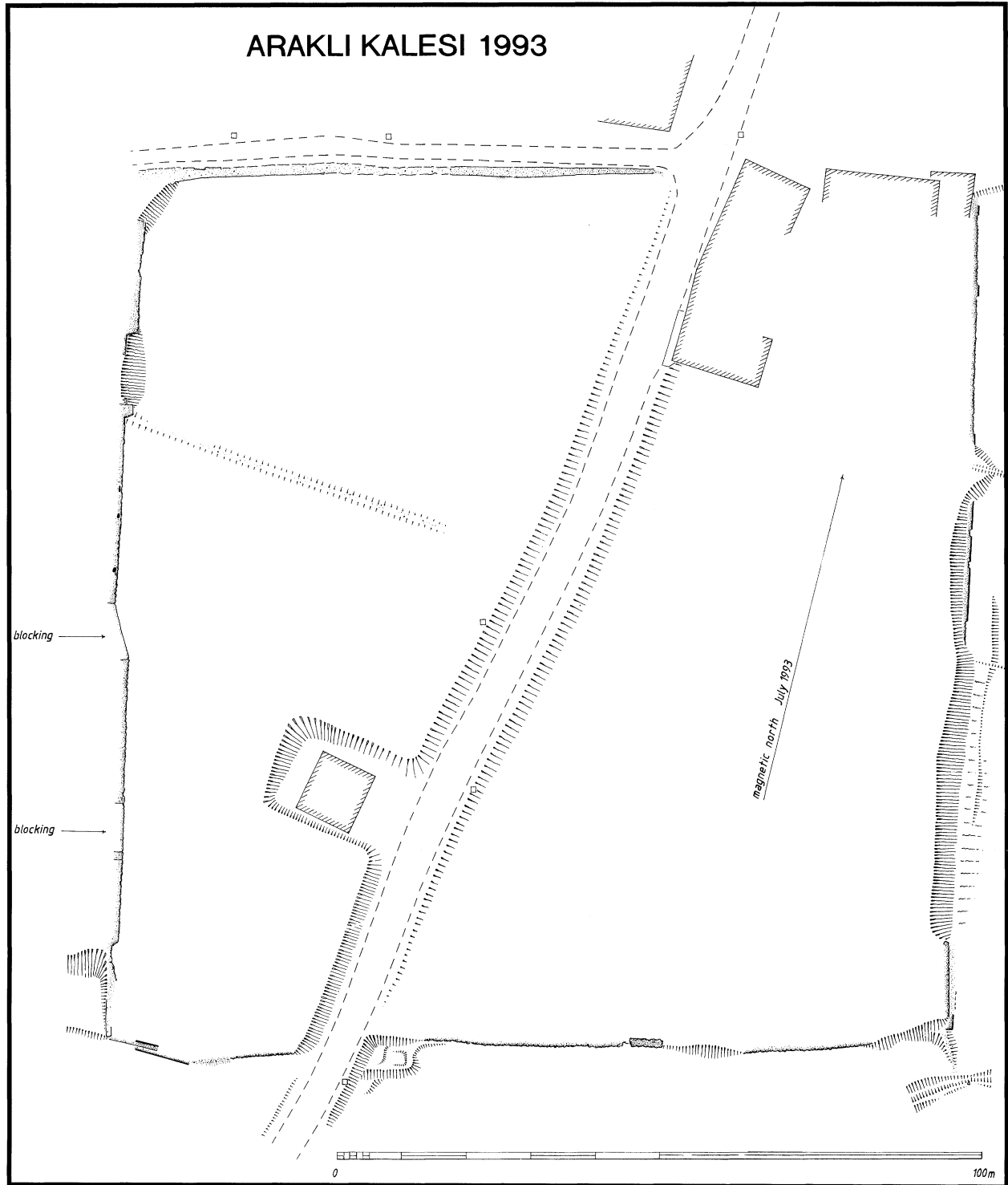
The main surviving structure on the curtain is the north gate; like the west gate, it also has an upper story with a second-floor apse aligned to the east. Unlike the west gate, this church is supported on a transverse barrel vault, so that it is clear that the alignment of

⁷ Ibid., 328–29, pls. 264–65.

⁸ Ibid., 329, pl. 265c.



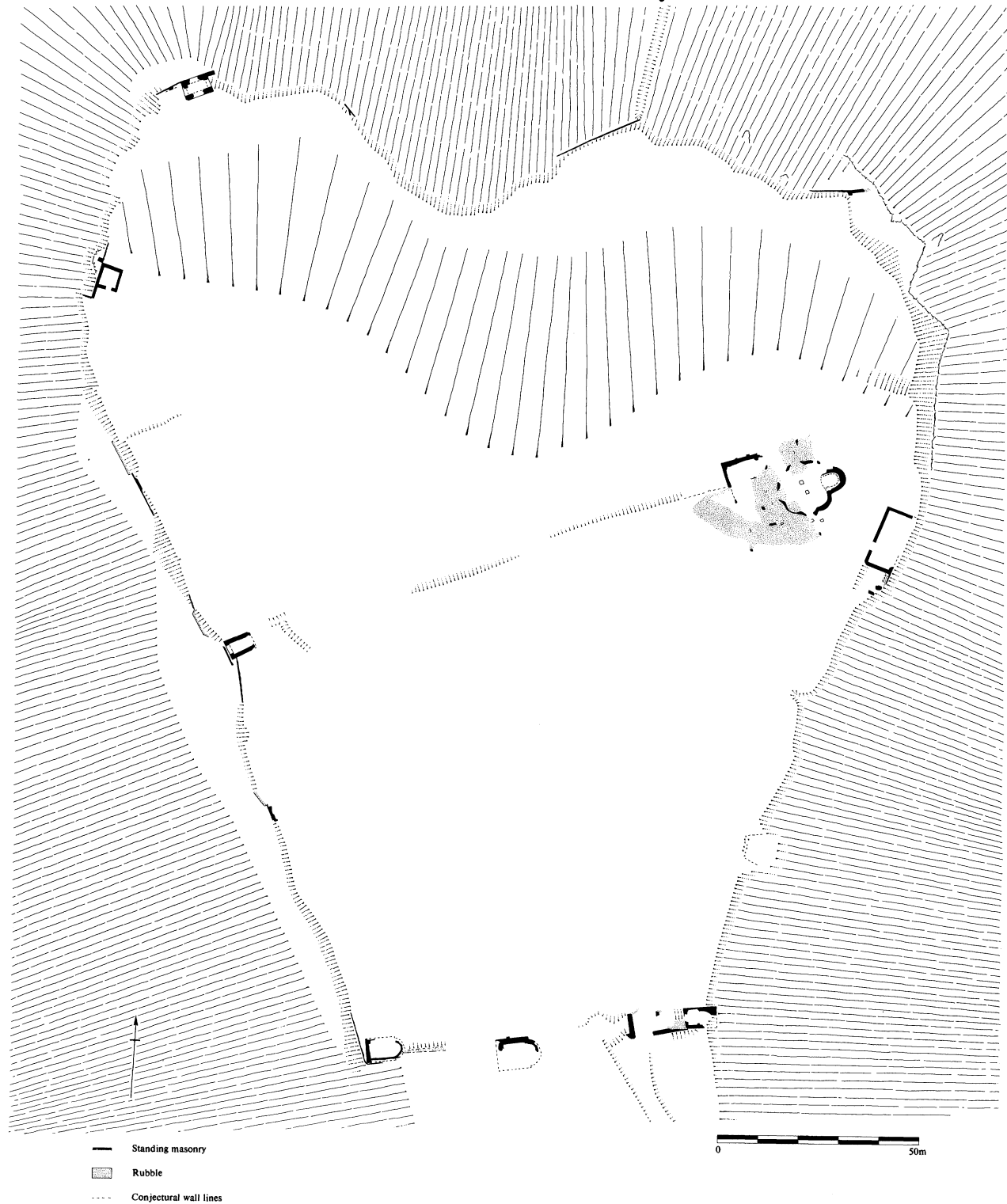
1 Map of the Byzantine Pontos



2 Plan of Araklı Kalesi

BUZLUCA KALESI

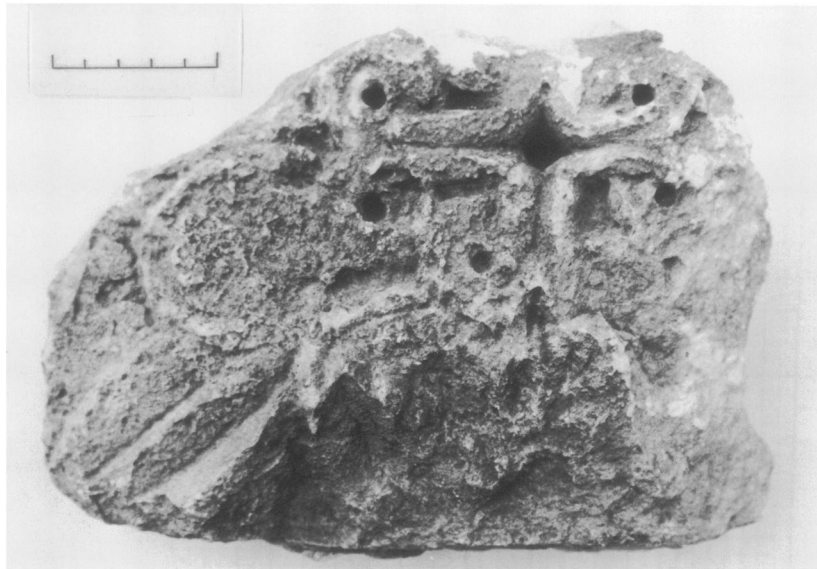
Monastery of Christ The Saviour



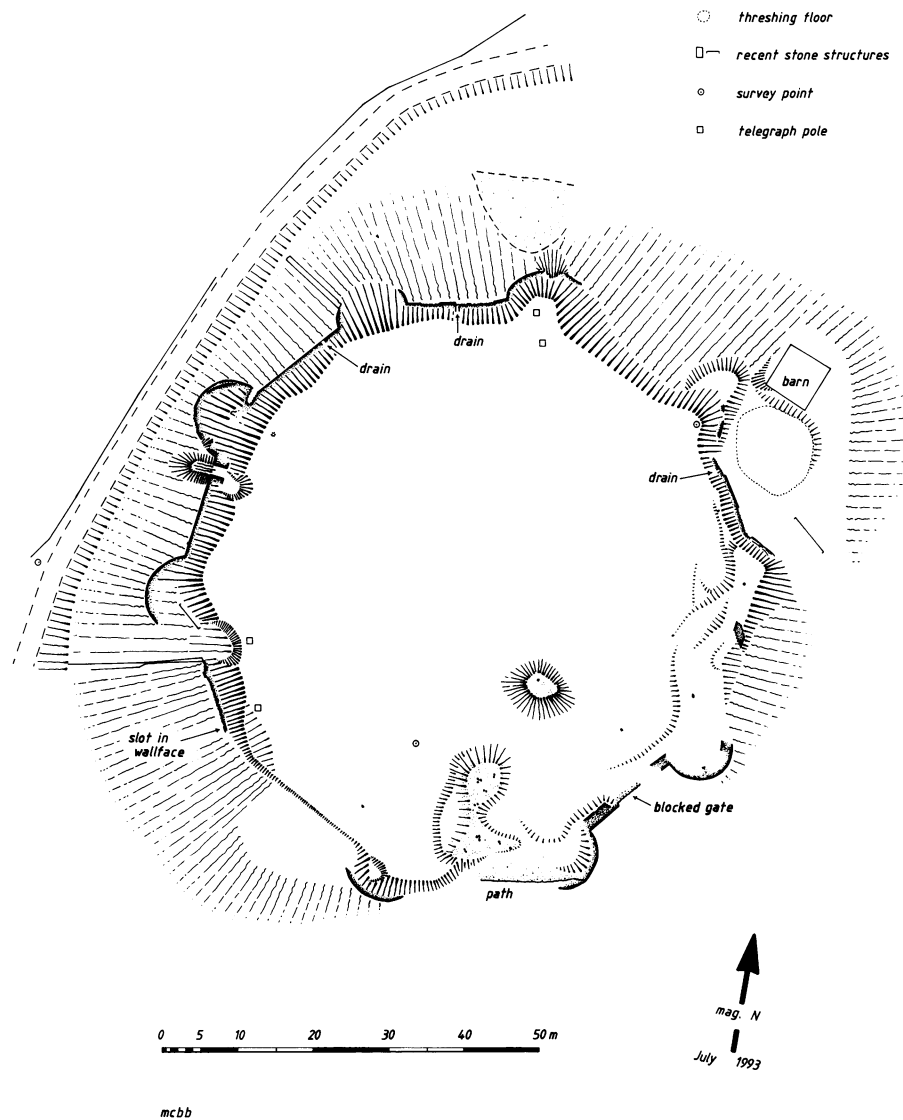
3 Plan of Buzluca Kalesi (monastery of Christ the Savior)



4 Buzluca Kale, the church



5 Pilaster capital fragment from Buzluca (scale in centimeters)



6 Plan of Hortokop Kalesi



7 View of narrow stone road above Kinalı Köprü, south of Hortokop



8 Baladan Chapel from the southeast

the church determined the plan of the gate. Gate arches survive to the north and south, and there is a chamfered cornice together with facing slabs and decorative pilasters similar to the southeast church and west gate. This gate provides the clearest evidence for the sophisticated stone architecture and decoration found at Buzluca.

Only fragments survive of the curtain wall round to the east side. Against the inside of the east curtain is a large building 15.5 m long by 8.3 m wide; abutting it to the south are the remains of a ruined apse. This building, which could be a monastic *trapeza*, is located 3 m from the main church. This much-overgrown ruined building located on the highest part of the site is known locally as the *havuz*, or pool. In 1993 the main part of the structure was cleared of a dense covering of brambles and bracken to reveal a centrally planned octofoil church with an east-facing, stilted apse. The building has an overall diameter of 16.8 m, with three exedrae in the middle of the north, south, and west sides linked by segmented walls (Fig. 4). The central space was undoubtedly domed, but it is not clear whether it was supported on central piers or columns. Two recent holes cut near the center of the building do not correspond with the position of any necessary supports. The principal entrance was in the middle of the west exedra, but not enough has survived of the north or south sides to show if these were pierced by doors or just windows. The walls have been very extensively robbed, leaving only the mortared rubble core surviving, in places up to 2.8 m high. The overall wall width was 1.5 m, and sufficient traces of facings were seen to show that the segmental walls were curved on the exterior. There was no evidence for the use of brick in either the standing core or the fallen masonry. The construction technique was similar to that of the chapels and gates on the curtain walls.

Only fragments of the narthex were seen, but in the collapsed rubble to the north side, the east apse and side walls of a *parekklesion* were found. Traces of a matching chapel to the south were also noted. To the east of the north *parekklesion*, further remains of walls suggested an additional building extending against the

north side of the church. The overall plan that emerges is of a centrally planned church with a broad narthex and flanking *parekklesia*, quite unlike any of the known Pontic churches or monasteries and of a form unparalleled in Anatolia.

The plan of the naos is also unusual. The curved walls of the exedrae and the segmental angles form an octofoil with a stilted apse. It is difficult to find close parallels for these elements in either the Byzantine or Caucasian worlds. The curved exterior face of the walls is quite unlike Armenian or Georgian churches, where the internal spaces are rarely articulated on the exterior surfaces. For many of these buildings the interior apses, transepts, and vaults appear as if they were hewn out of a solid stone cube. The architecture of the church at Buzluca rejects this tradition, so that the interior plan is directly represented by the external surfaces. At the same time this practice is remote from the tradition of church buildings in the Pontos or Anatolia, and the closest parallels lie in Constantinople and in imperially sponsored building projects. The overall plan of the church, narthex, and *parekklesia* is, however, comparable to the monastic pattern established at the Katholikon of the Great Lavra on Mount Athos in the early eleventh century, as well as sharing common features with the organization of chapels and churches in medieval Georgia. A number of stone fragments were found in the course of the survey, including part of a carved stone cornice and probably a pilaster capital (Fig. 5). In addition, we were shown the remains of other stonework later reused in village houses. This included the molded base for a chancel screen, said to derive from the church.

Apart from these structures, the interior of the site was empty of visible archaeological remains; roof tiles of varying fabric and color represented the overwhelming majority of surface finds, with only three pottery sherds. Recent cutting of open field drains across much of the interior of the site has revealed neither pottery nor structural remains. It is clear, however, that there are extensive hill wash deposits on even shallow slopes, so that further remains could well be obscured, especially around the north perimeter. An alternative explanation

for the absence of surviving internal structures could be the extensive use of timber buildings in what remains a richly wooded landscape.

Structurally the remains appear to belong to one major period, with additional buildings constructed against the south and west walls. Excluding the central church, there are six churches along the curtain wall, with two other possible apsidal structures and a rectangular building, possibly a *trapeza*. At the gates and the majority of towers, it appears that religious architecture takes priority over the requirements of defense. The principal dating evidence from the site is a fragment of architectural decoration found close to the southeast corner chapel (Fig. 5). This is a fragment of a limestone relief cross, probably part of a pilaster capital. The cross has a distinctive form with divided ends and deep drilling; parallels may be made with the decoration of the church of Constantine Lips in Constantinople (ca. 907), especially the relief decoration on the base of the mullions in the apse of the north church.⁹

The main monuments surviving from the Pontos in the medieval period are churches and castles. Castles invariably are located on isolated hilltops such as Hamurgan Kalesi behind Sürmene or on rocky coastal promontories like Kalecik Kalesi to the west of Araklı Burunu. The situation of Buzluca on a spur does not fit within these categories, especially as there is no additional defense at the more vulnerable south end of the site. Along the short, 100 m cordon on the south side are located at least three small churches barely 25 m apart, partly within and partly projecting in front of the walls. This necklace of churches and their holy relics and icons may be seen to constitute the principal supernatural protection for the site, whose monuments are religious rather than secular or defensive in character.

Byzantine sources record the foundation by the father of John Chaldos, duke of Chaldia in the late ninth century, of a monastery of Christ the Savior at *Sourmaina*.¹⁰ The monastery of Our Savior Christ *tou Chaldou* still existed in

the fifteenth century when it was obliged to contribute 1,000 aspers as the imperial subsidy to the monastery of Dionysiou on Athos. A number of locations for this monastery have been proposed, none at Buzluca. However, the structures at Buzluca are presumably identical with those of the monastery of Christ at Araklı recorded in the first Ottoman defter for Trabzon in 1486.¹¹ The modern village immediately northeast of the site retains the name of Araklı, a name now adopted by the modern town of Araklı. The location of the modern town at the mouth of the Kara Dere (Hyssos) is recent; its predecessor was situated 2 km west at Konakönü, known as Sürmene between 1840 and 1915, where there is a nineteenth-century mosque and other buildings next to the modern coast road.¹²

This identification of the religious settlement at Buzluca Kale with the middle Byzantine monastery of Christ the Savior appears reasonably secure. The site differs, however, from other known monasteries in the Pontos, which are frequently located in caves such as at Soumela or Vazelon. Other monastic parallels are not easy to find; a tradition of courtyard monasteries in a defended enclosure is seen in both Georgia and Armenia as well as the Byzantine world, but rarely do these monasteries extend over such a wide area. It does share the common location, away from the main centers of settlement and communications, and was secluded from the coast and the broad valley of the Kara Dere over the ridge to the east.

Almost nothing is known concerning classical settlement in the Pontos away from the coast. The military harbor and fort at Hyssos Limen/Sourmaina represent the only known settlement of any significance, which, by analogy with Arrian's description of the fort at Phasis in Colchis, was a civil as well as military center. It is likely that the fort at Hyssos Limen did not simply control the coastal hinterland but also was concerned with the routes inland, across the Pontic Alps to Gümüşhane and Bayburt (Paipertes) and east toward Erzerum (Theodosiopolis). The fate of the late Roman military garrisons on the Black Sea is unknown; although they are unlikely to have con-

⁹T. Macridy, "The Monastery of Lips (Fenari Isa Camii) at Istanbul," *DOP* 18 (1964), 308, fig. 19.

¹⁰Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, 327–28.

¹¹Bilgin, *Sürmene*, 39 n. 4, 182–85.

¹²*Ibid.*, 27–28.

tinued after the fifth century, Procopius still refers to the village of *Sousourmena* in the territory of Trapezous in his general account of the eastern Pontos.¹³ It can be argued that a major monastery was established in the district of Sourmaina in the mid-ninth century when the Byzantines were beginning to assert their influence east of Trebizond,¹⁴ in part taking on the former role of the military station as the focus for settlement and administration in the area. Subsequently this would appear to have shifted to the coastal castle of Kalecik and then, in early modern times, to the later Sürmene at Konakönü. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, settlers avoided the valley of the Kara Dere because of malaria, a problem remedied only toward the end of the last century by drainage. How early this became a problem is not known, but it may well have been a major factor in determining the shifting centers of settlement and administration from antiquity to medieval times.

HORTOKOP KALESİ

The medieval name of *Hortokopion* is cognate with the earlier name of *Gizenenica*, which appears in the *Notitia Dignitatum* as *Chasdane-nica*, garrisoned by *Ala Prima Iovia Felix*.¹⁵ The castle lies in the modern village of Ortaköy, formerly Hortokop, at an altitude of 675 m, 360 m above the town of Maçka and the valley of the Degirmendere. The site occupies a spur

and is circular in plan, with a diameter of 70 m. The perimeter is defended with a curtain wall and ten semicircular towers constructed of uncoursed rubble; there is a single gateway on the east side (Fig. 6). No trace of internal buildings survives. The date of the structure is not certain, but in plan it is unlike the majority of medieval castles in the Pontos, lacking in particular an inner bailey or keep (*içkale*), an invariable feature found, for instance, at Küdera Kale nearby. A possible medieval tower is located on the ridge above, on a prominent rock called Süper Taş at an altitude of 1,098 m, and this may be the Hortokopion of the medieval sources. Hortokop Kalesi lies above the well-preserved remains of the Roman road leading to the Zigana Pass and over the Pontic Alps toward Satala. Despite the lack of positive dating from pottery or other evidence, the combination of the sequence of place-name for the site with its location close to an ancient road (probably a Roman road, but see below) and the distinctive form of the fortifications strongly suggests that this is the site of the late Roman fort listed in the *Notitia Dignitatum* in the early fifth century.¹⁶

SURVEY IN TRABZON AND GÜMÜŞHANE VILAYET

In 1992 and 1993 the fieldwork was concerned with detailed structural survey of specific Roman and Byzantine military and religious sites. The objective of the 1994 survey was, first, to investigate the communications and landscapes associated with these sites and, second, to carry out further survey in the Gümüşhane Vilayet.

The Kara Dere, known in antiquity as the

¹³Procopius, *Wars* 8.2.8.

¹⁴An inscription from this period, recording the restoration of a church, is reported from Fetoka (mod. Taflancık?) dated to 933/34 and located south of the possible late Roman fort at Eski Pazar; see Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, 330. It was possible to visit Eski Pazar in 1992–93, but the current agricultural regime of the site precludes survey in the summer months. Behind the modern schoolhouse are the remains of a substantial gateway flanked by circular towers. No pottery or other finds were located, but the site could be late Roman and was comparable in size and form to the fort at Hortokop (see below). It is a possible candidate for the late Roman fort at *Caene Parembole* noted in the *Notitia Dignitatum* (Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, 327) and *Kali Parembole*, which is recorded in a late-6th-century *Periplus Ponti Euxini* as being 16 *milia* west of Rizion; see C. Zuckerman, "The Early Byzantine Strongholds in Eastern Pontus," *TM* 11 (1991), 530. The fort at Eski Pazar is situated on the east side of the Baltaci Dere (Psychros or "Cold River"); the next river to the east is the Kalo Dere (Kalopotamos), only 4 *milia* according to the *Anonymous Periplus* (A. Baschmakoff, *La synthèse des Periplus Pontiques* [Paris, 1948], 124–25).

¹⁵Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, 256–57.

¹⁶The work at Buzluca, Araklı Kalesi, and Hortokop was funded by the Society of Antiquaries of London, the A. W. Lawrence Fund, the British Institute of Archaeology at Ankara, and the University of Newcastle upon Tyne. We wish to thank all these institutions for their generosity.

We are most grateful to the General Directorate of Antiquities in Ankara for permission to carry out the work in 1992 and 1993, and particularly to our government representatives, Asuman Güngör and Güven Yetişkin, for their assistance. We also wish to acknowledge the help of Ayşe Sevim, director of the Trabzon Museum, and of Sevtap and Sena Türkö in the Trabzon Tourist Information Office. In addition, we would like to thank especially Mark Bowden (surveying), Brian Williams (planning), and Liz James (art history), together with students from the Universities of Birmingham and Newcastle upon Tyne.

Hyssos and from the sixth century as the valley of the Sourmaina, provides a route into the interior from the Roman fort at Araklı Kalesi, today leading from Araklı to Bayburt. No formal Roman road is to be expected from classical sources, but a route was available to armies in later historical periods, notably to the Russians in 1916.¹⁷ A castle called Zavzaga or Aho Kale was noted previously on the east side of the valley;¹⁸ on the west a high conical hill dominates the valley and the village of Aho. The mountaintop is called Aho Tepesi and provides wide views across the Bay of Sürmene and inland. The highest point of the hill is covered with a spread of mortared rubble and coarse brick extending over an area about 30 m in diameter. Without more specific evidence, such as fragments of painted wall plaster often encountered on Pontic sites, the remains are too extensive to represent one of the mountain chapels common in the region. The strategic location suggests that this was an outpost or fortlet, probably of late Roman or Byzantine date, intended to monitor communications and to guard against incursions from the south. Churches were reported near the village of Dağbaşı, but these were of nineteenth-century date. The modern road was followed toward the Salamankaş Pass as far as the rugged narrow defiles allowed. The ruined traces of earlier twentieth-century roads and bridges demonstrated the difficulty of recognizing earlier routes in extremely unstable mountain terrain. The significance of this valley should not be underestimated, as it provided a much shorter route toward Erzerum and Bayburt, particularly in the period after the partition of Armenia between Persia and Rome. The main settlement south of the pass was Aydıntepe (Hart), where there are the remains of a fifth- or sixth-century basilica.¹⁹

The lines of two reported paved roads were investigated.²⁰ The first was south of the fort at

Hortokop and led toward the *yaylas* at Camibogaşı, the itinerary illustrated on the Peutinger Table. This was a narrow road with large worn pavings. Within 400 m of the fort the road could be traced as a rock-cut shelf 4 m wide; further along the ridge the width was reduced to 2 m, and the surface was paved with large worn slabs (Fig. 7). Despite its narrow width, this is similar to stone-paved Roman roads elsewhere in Anatolia.

The second road lay to the west side of the valley of the Değirmen Dere (Pyxites), the route adopted by the Trabzon-to-Torul highway, north of the modern Zigana tunnel. Traces of a road cutting with stone curbs have survived modern road construction. Unlike the majority of medieval and modern routes over the Zigana Pass, this lay on the west side of the valley and represents the line of the Roman highway south toward Satala recorded in the Antonine Itinerary. It was the first stage of the military road that traversed the eastern frontier provinces and led ultimately to the Gulf of Aqaba and the Red Sea.

In the Gümüşhane Vilayet a number of medieval and later sites were visited. Two were of particular significance: Baladan (Celebi) and Atra (Edre). Baladan, a thirteenth-century Byzantine chapel, previously visited and photographed by Bryer, was measured and recorded. Wall paintings had survived but are now fragmentary and beyond hope of preservation (Fig. 8).

At Atra a medieval chapel and castle survive at the traditional birthplace of St. Theodore Gabras.²¹ The castle is small but impregnable and evokes the life of an *akritic* lord on the borders between the Byzantine and Islamic worlds. It is located on the west side of the valley and is separated from the church and traces of an early village by a steep-sided stream; the modern village lies about 500 m away on the hillside to the north. The castle comprises a lower bailey or ward on the south side of a detached pinnacle of rock. There are traces of structures and occupation debris including pottery datable to the middle Byzantine period. The rock is sheer sided and inac-

¹⁷ Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, 324.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 329.

¹⁹ The interior is illustrated in P. Donebdian, "Au royaume de la pierre," *Arménie: 3000 ans d'histoire (Les dossiers d'archéologie)* 177 [December 1992], 42. The building has been surveyed by Antonio Sagona, University of Melbourne, as part of his excavations and surveys in the Gümüşhane and Bayburt Vilayets.

²⁰ See the detailed study of these routes in Bryer and Winfield, *Byzantine Monuments*, 48–52.

²¹ A. A. M. Bryer, "A Byzantine Family: The Gabrades, c. 979–c. 1653," *University of Birmingham Historical Journal* 12 (1971), 168 n. 22, 175.

cessible. A lower entrance, rather like a vertical barbican, was 5 m above the level of the lower ward and could be reached in past times only by ladders or ropes. This led into a near vertical shaft, lit by windows that gave access to the top of the pinnacle, where the main refuge was

located. The upper parts of the structure were not visited during our survey.²²

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²²The survey in 1994 was supported financially by Dumbarton Oaks, and we are most grateful to that institution and to the Directorate of Antiquities in Ankara. The government representative was Mehmet Yaldiz, who was helpful throughout. The survey team comprised Anthony Bryer, James Crow, and Liz James.